

CLIDOPHORUS,

O R,

Of the EXOTERIC and ESOTERIC
PHILOSOPHY;

THAT IS,

Of the *External* and *Internal Doctrine*
of the Ancients :

The one open and public, accommodated to popular prejudices and the RELIGIONS establish'd by Law; the other private and secret, wherin, to the few capable and discrete, was taught the real TRUTH stript of all disguises.

Χρῆω δὲ σε πάντα πυθεσθαι,

Ἡ μὲν ἀληθείης εὐπειδέσθ' ἀτρεχέες ἦτορ;

Ἡ δὲ βροτῶν δοξᾶς, τῶν οὐκ ἐστὶ πιστὸς ἀληθείης.

PARMENIDES apud. DIOG. LAERT. Lib. 9. Sect. 22.

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CLIDOPHORUS,

OR

Of the *Exoteric* and *Esoteric* Philosophy.

I.



O know the **T R U T H** is one thing, to tell it to others is another thing: and as all men profess to admire the first, so few men practise the last as they ought. At the same time that **T R U T H** is own'd to be more valuable than wealth or honor, these

are by most without hesitation prefer'd before it; which appears not only by their eager application to procure riches and titles, while they abandon the study of **T R U T H**, or faintly pursue it: but also by the abject deference they shamelessly pay to men of power, and the indifference or neglect they commonly show to men of Learning. I shall not scrupulously inquire into the causes of this proceeding, which are various and multiform; but of all that can be assign'd, **I N T E R E S T** certainly is the most general and prevailing: for men being observ'd to be naturally fond of **T R U T H**, tho,

thro laziness or occupation, few are capable to acquire the possession of it; some cunning persons thought they cou'd not better attain to Authority over the rest (which draws Riches after it of course) than by pretending to be masters of this same TRUTH. Next they gave out that they cou'd impart it to others, without putting them to any labor, or diverting them from any business: and as for a little expense, who wou'd grudge to give a price out of his transitory pelf for the invaluable jewel of Knowledge? or not think it equitable to bestow a moderate reward on men, that cou'd equally delight and benefit him? Nor did these crafty Empirics stop here. They knew the falsity of facts, and the fallacy of reasonings, might at one time or other be detected by men of penetration. Wherefore, as the Devil is God's ape, they boasted of a superior and supernatural knowledge, not subject to the rules of Criticism, nor a proper object of the Understanding. Nay, they went a greater length, openly maintaining that it was lawful to ly for the public good; so that the common people (said they) being incapable of reflection, ought to be manag'd by guile, and to be deluded by agreeable fables into obedience to their Governors. Thus MNEVIS, an Egyptian king, impos'd on his subjects, by feigning an extraordinary communication with heaven. ZOROASTER successfully practis'd the same art on the Bactrians and other neighboring nations. PYTHAGORAS, after hiding himself for some time (as if he were dead) appear'd again at Crotona, preaching the joys and torments of another life. His disciple ZAMOLXIS vaunted having receiv'd divine Revelations in a cave, wherby he gain'd such authority, as to prescribe what laws he pleas'd to the rude Scythians. MINOS and EPIMENIDES in Crete, publish'd the conferences

ferences they had with JUPITER in their several retirements from the society of other men, on whom they obtruded their own fictions for divine commands. Who has not read of NUMA's intimacy with the Goddess EGERIA? from whom, if his own word ought to be taken, he learnt the Religion he taught the Romans. I shall name no more out of the long list, which the learned have of such antiquated seducers; nor any among those whose Institutions still prevail, except for example fake FOHI, SOMMONOKODOM, MAHOMET, and CINGHIS-CHAN. DIODORUS SICULUS, and other antient writers, were not afraid to rank MOSES in this class, tho his laws be truly divine, without any mixture of weakness or folly. But as this incomparable Legislator ought to want no apology among Christians, so I have solely to do at present with those Heathen IMPOSTORS; who perceiving that what was built upon fraud, cou'd onely be supported by force, they made it capital to question their dictates, and highly disreputable so much as to examine, let alone to doubt of them. The Priests, for their own interest, were not wanting any where to promote such penal laws; and the Magistrates (partly thro Superstition proceeding from their ignorance; and partly thro Policy, to grasp at more power than the laws allow'd, by the assistance of the Priests) have been commonly very ready to enforce those laws, by what they call'd *wholesome severities*. Hence no room was left for the propagating of TRUTH, except at the expence of a man's life, or at least of his honor and employments, wherof numerous examples may be alledg'd. The Philosophers therefore, and other well-wishers to mankind in most nations, were constrain'd by this holy tyranny to make use of 'a two-fold doctrine; the one *Popular*, accom-

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modated

modated to the PREJUDICES of the vulgar, and to the receiv'd CUSTOMS or RELIGIONS: the other *Philosophical*, conformable to the nature of things, and consequently to TRUTH; which, with doors fast shut and under all other precautions, they communicated onely to friends of known probity, prudence, and capacity. These they generally call'd the *Exoteric* and *Esoteric*, or the *External* and *Internal Doctrines*. That such a distinction they us'd, and that they practis'd accordingly, I am now going to show (being the subject of this *Dissertation*) by a select Collection I made of passages to this purpose, out of abundance of others, scatter'd up and down the ancient writers.



II.



ET ere I begin this Collection, interspers'd with my own observations, I cannot but deplore such a depravity of human nature, as to find Christians unhappily constrain'd any where, to regulate their conduct according to this Heathen distinction; tho they profess the Religion of him who is TRUTH *it self*, and *whose service is perfect FREEDOM*. They are commanded to LOVE *each other*, and to *speak the TRUTH one to another*: but they so obey, as if they were expressly injoin'd the contrary. Not onely every sect furiously opposes another, and all of 'em every one you can name; but those of the same sect stand in mutual opposition for the poorest trifles in the world, for airy distinctions, for a party-jargon, for

for favorite sounds, nay oftentimes for syllables and letters. They manifest all the signs of a perfect hatred, by branding, defaming, and avoiding each other; their leaders ever showing 'em the example, as if they were afraid they shou'd come to a better understanding, and sooner or later perceive that they quarrel'd about nothing. These are facts not possible to be deny'd. And as little can it be deny'd, that, not content with this rancor of mind, or the narrowness of their peculiar schemes and notions; they heartily plague each other with fines and incapacities, with exile, imprisonment, and other numberless ways: not to mention the last of all evils Death, which at least is so in their opinion; till Persecution ends at length in the *Inquisition*, as the utmost perfection of this hellish *Oeconomy of faith*. In fine, daily experience sufficiently evinces, that there is no discovering, at least no declaring of TRUTH in most places, but at the hazard of a man's reputation, imployment, or life. These circumstances cannot fail to beget the woful effects of insincerity, dissimulation, gross ignorance, and licentious barbarity. What's most of all to be lamented, is, that but too much of this leaven ferments in the purest *Churches*. What strange turns are given to controversies, about things in themselves indifferent, and where both sides of the question may be innocently maintain'd? What secret insinuations, what barefac'd calumnies, what unkind suggestions, what injurious treatment of those, who ought to be esteem'd and cherish'd as brethren? but who being thus forc'd to become enemies, and, sway'd by human frailty, are provok'd to repay their adversaries in the like coin with usury. Among *Priests* and *Ministers* in particular (leaving every one to assume the name he likes best, for they are no more agreed about names than any thing else) what unmanly pump-

ing and tale-bearing, what wiredrawing to an acknowledgement of their thoughts, and deposing 'em if they are frank, or suspecting 'em if reserv'd? Scurrility is the least exasperation, as being the commonest. This must of necessity produce shiftings, ambiguities, equivocations, and hypocrisy in all its shapes; which will not merely be call'd, but actually esteem'd, *necessary cautions*: occasion'd in all times and places by ambitious Priests, supported by their property the Mob; thus depriving us of the peace of life and the truth of religion, yea of philosophical discoveries and improvements, to the no small detriment of mankind. In all this affair Pride is ever join'd to Interest, for never was any Pride equal to the pretense of *Infalibility*; which has furnish'd this just observation, that as the Church of *Rome* claims to be ever in the right, so no other Churches will ever confess themselves to be in the wrong. Submit therefore you must right or wrong, or it will be the worse for you in all the respects I have mention'd. And yet (what's a natural consequence) do but sooth this spiritual arrogance, the most impious book shall pass current; witness that heap of *Scripture-contradictions*, as he thinks them, about Providence and the origin of the World according to the *MOSAIC* account, affectedly put together by *BERIGARDUS* in his *Circulus Pisanus*, a book otherwise very ingenious and useful. He endeavors even to prove, that the being of *GOD* cannot be known by reason, but onely by faith; and that the authority of the books of *Scripture* cannot be prov'd by history or reason, but be implicitly and devoutly receiv'd. Yet this bouncing compliment to *Mother Church*, in the third part falsely printed the fifth, saves all. *There is more stress to be laid on any miracles receiv'd and approv'd by the Church (as the cure of a slight ague divinely wrought)*

Part. 2.
Circ. 20.

Part. 3.
Circ. 3.4.

Part. 3.
Circ. 3.
pag. 232.

*in the name of Claude Guillebert
de Beaumont* *than*
see in the index

than if any man should see all who dy'd in this age brought to life again, than if mountains were remov'd out of their places; than if a new world was created: since in all these things there wou'd still remain the suspicion of magical fraud, whence they might be deem'd not really perform'd (which one wou'd think were easier suspected of an ague) but rather to be the fancies of our imaginations, or the illusions of our senses. The short and the long of this is, that we must believe the Church rather than our own eyes; if BERIGARDUS did not banter, as well as coarsen the old Lady's vanity. I doubt not, for my part, but he made use of the *Exoteric and Esoteric distinction*, to save his bacon, as we say: or if any, who has not read those *Circles* or *Dialogues*, will have it that he did not, with all my heart; but I am just going to demonstrate that others did, and that it was the common practice of all the antient Philosophers.

III.



HERFORE PARMEMIDES was unquestionably in the right, when he affirm'd that *there are two sorts of Philosophy, the one according to TRUTH, the other according to OPINION*: which

DIOG. LA-
ERT. lib. 9.
SECT. 22.

is not onely true of the Greeks and Romans, but as certainly so of other nations much more antient. I know that the words of PARMENIDES may be commodiously understood of the fallaciousness and uncertainty of the Senses, which often represent things otherwise than they are in themselves, and must therefore be examin'd and

corrected by Reason. From the Senses arises Opinion, from Reason Demonstration: on the former are huddl'd up the prejudices of the Vulgar, following the bare appearance of things; on the latter are founded the axioms of the Wise, who consider things as they are in themselves. But this is not the twofold Philosophy that makes our subject, nor what the author intended, but the other represented by PHILOPONUS. This writer assures us, that PARMENIDES in his *Exoterics* (or books accommodated to the public taste) *says fire and water are the beginning or principle of all things*, as if he had acknowledg'd the world to have been created: *but that in his Esoterics* (or books compil'd according to the truth) *he says the Universe is one, infinite, and immutable*. Here not only the distinction of *Exoterics* and *Esoterics* is literally to be learnt, but an example of it likewise alludg'd; namely, a beginning of things *Exoterically*, but *Esoterically* the eternity and incorruptibility of the Universe. The Egyptians, who were the wisest of mortals, had a twofold doctrine: the one secret, and in that very respect sacred; the other popular, and consequently vulgar. Who is there, that is ignorant of their sacred Letters, Hieroglyphics, Forms, Symbols, Enigmas, and Fables? Farr and near was spread the fame of the Egyptian Philosophy, *concealing things under the appearance of Fables* (says PLUTARCH) *and in speeches that contain'd obscure indications and arguments of the Truth: which they themselves expressly declare, by placing Sphynxes before most of their Temples; thus insinuating, that their doctrine concerning sacred things, consists in a sort of wisdom which is designedly perplext, and lying hid under study'd veils.* That we may give a specimen of such things as they conceal'd, the fame of MINERVA (says PLUTARCH again) *whom they think to be the same with*

In ARI-
STOT. lib.
1. Physicor.

Videantur
HERODOTUS, DIO-
DORUS SICULUS,
STRABO,
PLUTARCHUS, JAMB-
LICHUS, aliique bene
multi.
De ISIDE
et OSIRIDE,
Edit. Par.
pag. 354.

Id. Ibid.

with Isis, has this Inscription at Sais: I AM ALL THAT WAS, IS, AND SHALL BE: NOR HAS ANY MORTAL DISCOVER'D WHAT'S UNDER MY HOOD. Isis therefore, whom the vulgar believ'd to have been a Queen, and of whom they had a thousand different fables; was the Nature of all things, according to the Philosophers, who held the UNIVERSE to be the principal GOD, or the supreme being, and consequently abstruse or obscure, none seeing beyond the surface of Nature. But this they onely discover'd to the initiated. To that of Sais corresponds another Inscription still remaining at Capua; TO THEE, WHO ALONE ART ALL THINGS, O GODDESS Isis. Tho I am farr from designing to emty common places on this occasion, yet I cannot forbear inserting here part of a speech put into the mouth of Nature by APULEIUS. Mov'd by thy prayers, O LUCIUS, behold NATURE, the parent of all things, standing before thee; the mistress of all the elements, the initial stock of ages, the highest of the higher and queen of the lower powers, the uniform appearance of Gods and Goddesses, who govern by my motions the luminous beighths of the sky, the salutary breezes of the sea, and the melancholy silence of the nether parts: [whose one onely Deity under numerous forms, various rites, and different names, is ador'd by the whole world.] His prayer likewise to Isis, or rather to NATURE (as he himself explains it) may be read, with no less pleasure than instruction, in the same book. I cou'd bring many other proofs, that Isis in the mouth of the vulgar signify'd a Queen, and Nature in that of the Philosophers. PYTHAGORAS, that I may hastily pass over all others, travelling for knowlege to the Egyptians, suffer'd himself to be circumcis'd; that, getting admittance into

Id. ibid.

Metamor.
lib. 11. Edit.
Delphin.
pag 362.

CLEM. A.
lex. Strom.
lib. 1. Edit.
POTTER.
pag. 354.

the Sanctuaries, he might from the Priests and the Prophets learn the genuin sense of the mystical doctrine: which, as I said before, they discover'd to none, except when intreated with the utmost importunity, and soften'd by complaisance and assiduity.



IV.



HIS double manner of teaching was also in use among other oriental nations, especially the Ethiopians and Babylonians, the antient and modern Bramins, the Syrians, Persians, and the rest, principally instructed by ZOROASTER. The Classic books, and late Travels to this purpose, are in every body's hands. The Druids of the Gauls and Britons wou'd by no means deliver their mysteries or secret doctrines, to any except the initiated: that I may say nothing of the Hetruscans, and other Occidental nations, no more than of the present Chinese, Siamese, and Indians properly so call'd; the thing being so notorious, as to be deny'd by no body. From these several peoples, let us procede to the Greec Philosophers. Most celebrated is the *secret discipline* of PYTHAGORAS, after which original the ARISTOTELIAN *Acroatics*, or if you had rather *Acroamatics*, have been copy'd. But of these latter anon. The disciples of PYTHAGORAS were either *Hearers* or *Mathematicians*, or *Exoterical* or *Esoterical*, whom we may render Exterior and Interior auditors. All things were declar'd to the *Esoterical* (but without witnesses) in a plain, perspicuous, and copious

DIOG.
Laert. in
prooem.
Sect. 6. Item AM-
MIAN. Mar-
cellin. lib.
15. cap. 9.

DIOG.
Laert. in
PYTHAG.
Item JAM-
BLIC. POR-
PHYR. cum
multis aliis.

copious speech : while every thing, on the contrary, was deliver'd to the *Exoterical*, in a perplex, obscure, and enigmatical manner; nor was any thing told clearly, except popular and vulgar matters. The silence injoin'd to the latter, or the probation they were to undergo, lasted five years, or two years at the least; but that of the former, whom they also stil'd and reputed *perfect*, was perpetual : not towards each other (as has been rashly believ'd by many) but onely towards all those, who were not of their fellowship; whence that most common maxim among them, that *all things ought not to be declar'd to all men*. They reserv'd their own doctrines to themselves, as so many holy secrets; or if any others happen'd to be present, they told their minds to each other by symbols and enigmas or parables : whence it has unluckily happen'd, that scarce any thing which was of use or moment among them, is come to the knowlege of the public; this being the true reason of the obscurity, or rather the almost intire loss, of the Pythagorean Philosophy. Of this conduct I shall give one example. **LYSIS** the Pythagorean severely chid his condisciple **HIPPARCHUS**, for having publish'd some points of the *Esoteric Philosophy*; and for having communicated to men, who were neither initiated, nor prepar'd by contemplation and the necessary sciences, their master's doctrine : whereupon he was expell'd out of the school, and a monument erected for him, according to the custom of the Pythagoreans, as if he had been actually dead.

DIAGEN.
Laert. lib 8.
Sect. 1.

JAMBLIC.
in vita PY-
THAG. cap.
17. n^o 75.

CLEM. A-
lex. Strom.
lib. 5. pag.
680. ORI-
GEN. contra
CELS. lib. 2.
Edit. Cant.
pag. 67. et
lib. 3. pag.
142.



V.



OR was such silence and reserve peculiar to the Pythagoreans. Let us therefore proceed from the Samian to the Stagyrite. *The Aristotelians* (says CLEMENS *Alexandrinus*) assert, that

of their writings some indeed are Esoteric; while others are vulgar, and Exoteric. This is very home to the point, and the passage is not a little confirm'd, if not much illustrated, by AULUS GELLIUS in the following words. *It is said that of the books and arts, which the Philosopher ARISTOTLE, king ALEXANDER's tutor, deliver'd to his disciples, he had two sorts. Some he nam'd Exoteric, others Acroatic. Such were call'd Exoteric, as taught Rhetorical studies, the faculty of pleading or subtil disputations, and the knowledge of political affairs: but those were still'd Acroatic, that pertain'd to the contemplation of Nature, and to dialectical disquisitions. He admitted all his disciples without distinction, and even such of the people as pleas'd, to his Exoteric lessons, which he read in the evening: but he spent the morning in the Lyceum upon explaining the Acroatic or Esoteric doctrine, to which (pursues GELLIUS) he did not indifferently admit every body, but with caution and choice. To ALEXANDER, complaining that he publish'd and made common his Acroatic books, he answer'd, know that they are neither publish'd, nor yet unublish'd; seeing they'll be onely intelligible to those, who have been my hearers. ARISTOTLE's Exoterics are mention'd by PLUTARCH, against*

COLOTES;

Strom. lib.
1. pag. 681.

Noct. At-
tic. lib. 20.
cap. 5.

Id. ibid.

Id. ibid.

Pag. 1115. *Exoterics* are mention'd by PLUTARCH, against

COLOTES; and before him by CICE^{RO}, who sometimes understands by them indigested and unfinished treatises, in contradistinction to such as were perfect and studiously polish'd. But his *Exoterics* are to be sought from none, preferably to ARISTOTLE himself, who refers to them in many places. The Stoic Philosophers, nay the Epicureans, had certain secrets among themselves, wherof they did not easily permit the reading to every body. PLATO wisely providing for his own safety, after the poysonous draught was administer'd to SOCRATES by profane and impious persons, wrote rather poetically, than philosophically: wherfore, by epically transforming the nature of things, the elements, and the celestial globes, with the passions of the body and the qualities of the mind, into Gods, Goddeses, Geniuses, and Demons, he furnish'd large materials for fables to the Platonics falsely so call'd; for night is not more unlike to day, than the modern to the primitive Platonics. *I pass over in silence* (says APULEIUS, who for all his affected luxuriancy of stile, is an excellent Commentator on the Antients) *those sublime and divine Platonic doctrines, understood by very few of the pious, and absolutely unknown to every one of the profane.* All PLATO's books are so full of the *Exoteric* and *Esoteric distinction*, which is the true key to his works, that out of them alone I cou'd write a fizable volum on this subject. Who is there that seems to speak more positively about a beginning of the world, or a *Creation* in our language, than he? and yet he's affirm'd by PHURNUTUS, to have maintain'd the UNIVERSE to be JOVE. Nay he plainly enough insinuates so much himself in diverse places. Besides that in his second book *de Republica*, he divides Theology into symbolical or mystical, and into philosophical or demonstrative,

Ad Attie.
lib. 4. ep.
16.

CLEM. 4.
lex. Strom.
lb. 5.

In Apologia,
pag.
119.

De nat. De-
or. cap. 2.
Αλλως. E-
dit. Gal.
Amst.
1688.

strative, of which distinction he makes almost a perpetual use. Wherefore I wou'd advise certain persons, who affect citing of PLATO before other writers, to deal fairly, by acquainting their readers in what sense he speaks: and whether from exotic tradition, or philosophical persuasion; whether Exoterically and Vulgarly, or Esoterically and as a Philosopher. But the Academics, the true followers of PLATO (of whom presently by themselves) held quite another course, and a much better.

DIOG. LA-
ERT. lib. 9.
Sect. 8.

Epheſian HERACLITUS, in the book which he intituld *Of Nature*, explain'd nothing clearly; whence he got the surname of *Scotinus*, or *Obscure*. Yet because he fell under the blame of several, on account of this obscurity, some body has honor'd his memory with the following Epigram.

Id. Ibid.

*You must not HERACLITUS slightly read,
The way is rugged, and the book obscure;
But if into his sense he does you lead,
All's plain, and like the sun it self most pure.*

The readers wanted a key, that might open 'em a passage into his secret meaning: and such a key, that I may hint it *en passant*, is to be, for the most part, borrow'd by the skilful from the writers themselves.



VI.



UT dismissing the rest, which wou'd be infinite labor to run over particularly, *it was the custom of the Academics* (says C^ICERO) *to conceal their opinion; and not to discover it to any body, except to such as had liv'd with them even to old age.* I shou'd have thought this an over-caution, unless I had known the Superstitious to be so very jealous, and ever bent upon mischief. What C^ICERO has somewhere written about others, does not less appositly agree to the Academics. *There are two sorts of books, says he: the one popularly written, which they call'd Exoteric; the other more perfectly written, namely the Esoteric, which they left in their Commentaries, or finish'd Pieces.* Hence he rightly concludes, that the same Philosophers *do not always seem to say the same thing,* tho they continu'd of the same opinion; which is as true as Truth it self, of many writers in our own time. Wherefore the incomprehensibility of the Academics, their dubitation and perpetual suspension of assent; were not so propos'd and recommended, as if in effect they always doubted (which is impossible) or that they retain'd their assent, by reason of the insuperable incomprehensibility of things: but first, because they were unwilling to declare their judgment of every thing indifferently; and secondly, they were willing safely to dispute concerning all subjects whatsoever, by equally maintaining both sides of the question. Nor will any man in his senses, we may reasonably

Apud AUGUSTIN.
contra Academ. lib.
6.

De fin. bon.
nor. & mal.
lor. lib. 5.
cap. 5.

Ibid.

reasonably believe, deny them to have acted both wittily and wisely, as things then stood. **MOSES**, the most illustrious Lawgiver of the Jews (that I may pass over in silence all the other Prophets, with their eternal types and allegories) is not disown'd by his followers, to have departed sometimes from the accurate truth of divine and natural matters; and frequently to accommodate his words, when speaking of **GOD** himself, to the capacity and preconceiv'd opinions of the vulgar. This is incontestable: and hence it is, that the *Rabbins* vend so many fables, and that there is such palpable darkness in the *Cabala* (I wish it rested only there) concerning the **MOAIC** Religion and Republic. Some of the *Rabbins*, however, were more subtle. What can be more *Esoteric* in some places, than the *Talmud*? which makes the Worlds not only plural, but also numberless; tho it specifies the number of eighteen thousand, a certain sum for an uncertain: besides that the *Cabala*, we just nam'd, makes the world infinite and eternal, increated and immense. **JESUS CHRIST** himself taught for the most part in parables, expressly forbidding *the children's bread*, or *that which is holy*, meaning the true doctrine, to be cast to the dogs: and admonishing his disciples, after the manner of the Philosophers, *not to cast their pearls before swine*, since these animals trampling such ill bestow'd gifts under their feet, and turning again upon their benefactors, not with gratitude but fury, will do their endeavor to tear them to pieces. This is ever the way of the sordid and the ignorant. *We speak wisdom among them that are perfect*, says **PAUL**: less profoundly therefore among the ruder sort, nor do the other *Apostles* (from whom I might bring many passages to this purpose) speak a different language; tho farr be it from me to make any comparison between

MAT. 13.

26. & 7. 6.

MAR. 7.

27.

MAT. 7. 6.

1 Cor. 2. 6.

tween them, and the nations or sects I have brought on the stage in this discourse. These, as we have shown, made use of fables out of fear or craft; those employ'd parables for edification, and the more effectual conveyance of their doctrine.

Yet, that we may not leave this subject abruptly, the *first notions* are not better known, than are the symbols, tropes, types, allegories, shadows, and mysteries, which on every occasion are alledg'd by all kinds of Christians. 'Tis not a thing therefore either so strange or wonderful, that it shou'd be eagerly controverted on every side, that it shou'd be a matter of the nicest inquiry, and a question agitated with no small concern among so prodigious a variety of sects, *what was in reality the original and genuin Institution of JESUS?* and this whether it be, that at the beginning it was involv'd in such sacred obscurity; or rather that it was afterwards thus perplext, by the inventions of the wily or the imaginations of the weak. But in whatever manner it so happen'd, I am downright asham'd of those *Fathers*, who made such ordinary actions as eating bread, drinking wine, and dipping in water, or washing with it, to pass for *tremendous and inutterable Mysteries*.

Very intelligible and apposite figures we grant 'em to be, very significative of the things they represent and exhibit; but containing nothing terrible or abstruse, much less inutterable or inconceivable. Nevertheless, what those *Fathers* onely feign'd to be MYSTERIES, that they might in nothing come short of the Heathenism they had quitted; their successors took care shou'd become unintelligible to some purpose, and be tremendous in more senses than one, or in any sense except that of the Gospel. Yet for as awful and frightful as the *Fathers* describ'd the Christian MYSTERIES, they order'd them to be most diligently conceal'd;

δέντα,
ἐπιφοβα,
φοβερα,
κρυφια,
ἀφαντα, α-
ποφαντα,
ἀφαντα
μυστηρια.

ceal'd;

ceal'd; lest the Heathens, or others (to give their own reasons) might scorn and despise their simplicity.



VII.



UT why do I insist on particulars? since this distinction of *Exoterical and Esoterical doctrines*, was, as it were, the *Catholic establishment* of all nations; which shows that *Universality* is no infallible mark of TRUTH, unless it be maintain'd that there is more wisdom than folly, more honesty than wickedness, more knowledge than ignorance in the world. I have a cloud of witnesses to confirm what I have advanc'd: but let CLEMENS *Alexandrinus* be their spokesman and interpreter. *All they* (says he) *who have treated of divine subjects, whether Barbarians or Greeks, did conceal the PRINCIPLES of things; but deliver'd the TRUTH under enigmas and symbols, under allegories and metaphors.* And indeed, not to speak of designing men, many others were persuaded, that both natural and divine things might best be explain'd by figures. Among these the Philosopher SALLUSTIUS is not the least considerable: to whose authority notwithstanding, in this point, I am farr from assenting. He looks upon it as improper, *to be desirous to teach all men alike, what is true concerning the Gods; since this in the unwise, who are incapable of such instruction, will breed contempt, and in the wise laziness: whereas to conceal the Truth under Fables* (adds he) *refrains the former from despising, and necessitates the latter*

Stromat.
lib. 5. pag.
658.

In libro de
Diis et
Mundo,
cap. 3.

to *Philosophize*; as obliging them to inquire into the right meaning of such Fables, which will not let time lie idle on their hands. But where is the necessity, what is the end, of teaching the Vulgar any thing they cannot understand or practise? and as for the Learned, tis a jest to talk of exercising their diligence; when time can never fail them in imploying their industry about what is intelligible and usefull: for all those studies are vain, superfluous, nay ridiculous; that relate to matters in themselves incomprehensible, or of no manner of concern to human life. Not plainly to say and profess all you think, or to do it by circumlocution and figures, is one thing: but tis quite another thing, to speak positively against your own judgment, or against the TRUTH in any figure of speech whatever. For all this, I am oblig'd as a historian (since the *History of the Exoteric and Esoteric Philosophy* is my present subject) to relate, that there have been of old, as well as at this time, several great men; who declar'd it their opinion, that FRAUD and SUPERSTITION were necessary means, to keep the common people in good order. Among such STRABO, a man himself not in the least superstitious, justly claims the foremost place. In the first book of his invaluable *Geography*, he expresses his judgment in the following words. *These* [speaking of artizans and the rest of the mob] *are turn'd* from their vices, when either by words, or certain frightful representations, they learn that punishments, and terrors, and comminations, procede from the Gods, or that they believe such things have been inflicted on any Persons: for tis impossible to govern the bulk of women, and of the promiscuous vulgar, by Philosophical discourses, or to lead them into religion, piety, or fidelity; but to this purpose SUPERSTITION is found to be necessary, which

Edit.
Amst.
pag. 36.

can never subsist without fictions and miracles. Wherefore JUPITER's thunderbolts, MINERVA's shield, NEPTUNE's trident, the torches and serpents of the FURIES, and those spears which are reckon'd the arms of the Gods, ARE ALL FABLES, as well as the WHOLE ANTIENT THEOLOGY: for these things were receiv'd by LEGISLATORS, as so many bullbeggars, whereby to keep in order the silly part of mankind. Nor is STRABO, as I hinted before, single in this opinion concerning the use of Fables. HOMER, which DIONYSIUS Halicarnassens tells us in his *Life*, uses a paradoxical and fabulous narration of things; that he may fill his readers with diligence and admiration; and render his auditors amaz'd. That all his Gods are pure natural causes, qualities, incidents, and events, are prov'd in this very *Life*: but more

Edit.
Amst.
pag. 285.

Ἡρακλεί-
του, ουχι-
του Σκο-
τεινου, πρὸς
τοὺς κατὰ
Ὅμηρον
βλασφη-
μῶσαντας
Ἀλλήγο-
εῖαι φυσί-
και, σοφω-
τάται, ἀ-
ναγκαι-
οῦνται.

particularly and expressly by HERACLITUS, whose *Allegories of HOMER* deserve to be carefully perus'd. I shall neither obstinately deny, that the horror of Superstition, instill'd into the minds of men, never produc'd any good; nor shall I easily grant, that it ever had so desirable an effect: seeing that, the circumstances of all things duely consider'd, it must necessarily happen, that Superstition shou'd occasion more evil than good in the world. But granting that Superstition had at any time prov'd beneficial to the public, yet at other times without number, and in things of incomparably greater importance, it will be found detrimental, destructive, and utterly pernicious; nor advantageous to any, excepting PRIESTS or PRINCES, who dextrously turn it to their own interest, tho even these are not always able to direct it at their pleasure. It does not onely every where disturb private society and concord, and sometimes bring its sacred and sovereign managers to the last extremities, but

but too often disorders, or quite overturns, most flourishing Governments, which the Histories of all ages and nations make evident by infinite examples. As for the particular persons blasted with this contagious air, it never leaves 'em a moment's tranquillity, waking or dreaming, in occurrences of life, or at the point of death.



VIII.



O pass over many passages out of the most noted Apologists for Fables, such as those I have already nam'd; together with PROCLUS, PORPHYRY, JAMBlichus; MACROBIUS (not to speak of ORPHEUS, EMPEDOCLES, PARMENIDES, and such other of the Antients; who wrote allegorically) TIMEUS *Locrus*, that excellent disciple of PYTHAGORAS, teaches the same doctrine with STRABO: for he thinks Superstition to be no less necessary than the latter, for the restraint and government of the people. Tho' the passage declaring this be a little of the longest, yet I shall wholly insert it here out of his golden treatise concerning the *Soul of the world*; especially, because it is from thence most manifest, that neither PYTHAGORAS nor the Pythagoreans believ'd the *Transanimation*, or *Transmigration* of *Souls*; for holding of which they are so famous: Μητιμ
ψυχωσις. but that by this word they did *Esoterically* understand the incessant flux or motion of all things, and the perpetual change of forms in matter, one never decaying or dying but to begin and take on another; while *Exoterically* they did, to the promiscuous

Vide HE-
RODOT.
lib. 2. n.
123.

Edit.
Amst. pag.
565, 566.

HOMER.

Namely
Egyptian.

miscuous croud, affectedly preach the Egyptian Revolution of Souls, for the punishment or reward of what was transacted in the Body. This last does certainly transmigrate, revolve, interchange, or however otherwise it may be commodiously express; as no less does the Soul in the sense of those, who will have it to be *Ether* acting by the mechanism of the Brain and Nerves, which are the proper organs of thinking and feeling. But let us hear our Author. *A good Understanding* (says TIMEUS) *and the antient Philosophy, after purging the mind from false opinions and imbuing it with Knowledge, have deliver'd it from great ignorance, and excited it to the contemplation of divine subjects: in which things if any be so conversant, as to live content with his lot, to be mov'd at nothing incident to humanity, and adds to diligence temperance, that man is certainly happy. To whomsoever therefore the Divinity has granted this favor, he, by the TRUEST PHILOSOPHY, is led to the most consummate felicity. But if any Person will continue refractory and obstinate, he shall be sure of punishment both from the Laws, and from those Doctrines, which denounce celestial and infernal judgments; as that unhappy ghosts will meet with implacable torments, and those other things which the Ionic poet has deliver'd out of antient Tradition. For as we cure the bodies of sick persons with any sort of remedies, if they refuse the most wholesom; so we keep the minds of men in order by FALSE REASONS, if they will not be govern'd by TRUE ones. Wherefore there is a necessity of teaching those foren torments: as that there is a TRANSMIGRATION OF THE SOUL, those of Cowards passing into female bodies, assign'd em for a disgrace; those of Murderers into beasts of prey, for a punishment; those of Luxurious persons into the form of swine or goats; those of Inconstant*
and

and Boasting fellows, into animals flying in the air; and those of the Slothful and the Idle, of the Un-teachable and the Foolish, into the shapes of animals living in the water. Here behold a most illustrious example of the double Philosophy, or Theology, if you'd rather have it so! Here's the true key, for opening the Egyptian and Pythagorean Mysteries! Nor are we to wonder any longer, that the same men do not always seem to say the same things on the same subjects, which problem can onely be solv'd by the distinction of the External and Internal Doctrine. An application to the Caldean Resurrection is very easy.



IX.



THAT I may now return in particular to Fables, *be persuaded of this* (says De nat. PHURNUTUS, the Philosophizing Deor. cap. ult. Divine, to his son) *that the Antients were no contemptible persons, but capable to understand the nature of the Universe; and peculiarly happy in philosophically explaining it by symbols and figures. This I can easily grant, and that the knowledge of the nature of things, is much better convey'd by allegories than fables: for allegories do onely cover the Truth, while fables confound and quite overwhelm it. Nothing is better known. But Fables, urges SALLUSTIUS, declare to all men the existence of the Gods: yet who and of what kind they are, they manifest to those alone that are capable. I would gladly have it so: but who are they that are capable? or that, in such cimmerian darkness, can onely grope out the Truth? who can accurately distinguish,*

De Diis et Mundo, cap. 3.

whether the point in question be a real matter of fact, or a fable invented at pleasure? when we see the learned and unlearned, whole communities and nations, divided on this subject. What is a History to CAIUS, is a fable to PUBLIUS. Where's the contemporary witness? or who else is to be trusted? what end or limitation will there be of Fables, if once you allow the use of them? how many objects of reverence and false worship, are owing to Fables misunderstood? how many Gods and Goddesses? whose rites and festivals beget idleness and debauchery, drunkenness and sloth, which are the fruitful sources of all vice (while the Priests of those imaginary powers are gainers by the public loss) which can neither be said nor imagin'd of figures and symbols. PLATO was so sensible of this, that, in the second book of his *Republic*, he forbid all those Fables concerning the contentions and wars of the Gods, their rapes, adulteries, slaughters, lies, thefts, distresses; with such other crimes and calamities, as begot wrong notions of the Gods, or that perverted natural morals by their examples: for men will never think that to be a vice or imperfection in themselves, which is a virtue or perfection in the Divinity. Wherefore the same PLATO banish'd HOMER, yet with distinguishing marks of honor; tho he well knew, that all his Fables veil'd natural matters: but to the Vulgar they seem'd so many real persons and stories that had certainly happen'd; as the reverence of objects, excited in the learned by images, terminates among the unlearned in the images themselves. For my part I do entirely agree with PLATO in the said second book, that *certain things*, as those above-mention'd, *ought not to be publicly receiv'd, whether fabulously deliver'd or otherwise: for young People*

are

are not able to distinguish if such be Fables or not ; and the opinions that are imbib'd in that tender age, can scarce ever be rectify'd, or they are eradicated with the greatest difficulty. This is prov'd undeniable by daily experience. O but, says DIONYSIUS Edit. Amst. pag. 323. *Halicarnassens* in the *Life of HOMER*, it ought not to appear strange, if by enigmas and certain fabulous discourses, he delivers his conceptions, for this is occasion'd partly by poetry, and partly by the custom of the *Antients*: that the lovers of learning, being delightfully attracted by a certain elegance, might the more easily both seek after truth, and discover it ; and that the unlearned might not despise those things, which they cannot understand. For there is a time, when what is figuratively said, becomes pleasant ; and what is clearly explain'd, contemptible. This I allow to be a sufficient apology as to every thing, except RELIGION ; wherein I think all Fables to be intolerable, and that no Allegories ought to be admitted, but onely in expressing the DIVINE NATURE and ATTRIBUTES. To say that Fables will quicken our diligence, is the same plea with that for Mysteries ; as if time lay heavily on our hands, and that we had no other occupation but Criticism. Besides that if the one or the other be explicable, why not contemptible after they become known, according to the reasoning of DIONYSIUS and others ? or if both of 'em be incomprehensible and unfathomable, our diligence is in vain, and we are exercis'd about nothing ; or, which is the same thing, to no purpose.



X.



IN conceiving, explaining, and declaring the **DIVINE NATURE** and **ATTRIBUTES**, I readily own that Symbols and Metaphors are not onely apt and useful, but the last of 'em even absolutely necessary. Nor, in truth, can any ideas of them be otherwise imparted to the illiterate, of which this is not the place to render a reason. But, as farr as the matter concerns our subject of *the Exoteric and Esoteric Doctrine*, the most antient Philosophers, being no less conscious of the said difficulty relating to vulgar conceptions, than justly cautious against the detraction, malignity, violence, and rage of the superstitious, were not so solicitous to conceal any thing, as their real judgment concerning the **DIVINE NATURE**: for they observ'd that few kept a sedate temper in discoursing on this point, either when they were not able to maintain their own opinions, nor to confute those of others. For this disposition we have accounted before in the Priests, who stamp the same impression on the minds of the People. What Reason cannot support, Force must: and that shall not be permitted to be told, which shows the Multitude to be ridiculous, or their Guides impostors. This put the Philosophers every where on their guard. **SIMONIDES**, as we are inform'd by **TULLY**, *being ask'd by the tyrant HIERO, what GOD was, or of what nature? requested the space of one day to think on the subject. When the day after, the same demand was reiterated, he begg'd for two days.*

De nat. De-
or. lib. 1.
cap. 22.

But

But when he had frequently doubl'd the number of days, and HIERO admiring ask'd why he did so? because, said he, the longer I consider upon it, the more obscure this thing appears. Not that he had nothing to answer: but that it was dangerous to tell the truth, or to do so without ambiguity and circumlocution, as by the examples of diverse Philosophers might be easily prov'd. THALES the Milesian, when CRESUS demanded of him, what he thought of the GODS? after obtaining some days for deliberation, answer'd, Nothing: provided that TERTULLIAN (after his wonted manner) has not confounded HIERO and CRESUS, SIMONIDES and THALES. When EUCLID of Megara was ask'd by some body, of what nature were the GODS, and in what things they chiefly delighted? As to all other things, he answer'd that he was ignorant: but one thing he knew for certain, that they hated curious persons; for EUCLID was well aware, that a great questioner is a great babler. STILPO being likewise ask'd by CRATO, whether the GODS took pleasure in prayers and prostrations? You fool (said he) do not consult me about such things in the street, but at home. He makes use almost of the same expressions here, in which BION the Borysthenite answer'd to one, who ask'd him if there were any Gods?

TERTULLIAN. ad Nationes, lib. 2. cap. 2.

JOAN. STOB. Serm. 46. Edit. Francofurt. pag. 164.

DIOG. LAERT. lib. 2. sect. 117.

Id. lib. 4. sect. 46.

Old man, have you the proud farr off remov'd?

These Philosophers cou'd have all made proper answers, but they were unwilling to displease by declaring the truth; lest they shou'd bring the Vulgar on their backs, whose inconsiderateness has in all ages prov'd the greatest support of the Priests: insomuch that even in a certain Christian Church it is grown a Proverb, that *the Ignorance of the Laity is the Revenue of the Clergy.* Agreeable to what has been related of several Philosophers,

losophers, I have somewhere read of the famous Rabbi HILLEL, that to one inquiring of him with great curiosity, *What was the nature of GOD? if I knew it, my son* (answered he) *yet I shou'd be farr from telling you my thoughts about it.*

Letters to
SERENA,
P. 114.

To illustrate this point yet further, by what I observ'd on another occasion; the true reason why at a certain time the theory of the Starrs and Planets was so little, or at least not so generally known in Greece, was: that the common people wou'd not endure to hear those things made subject to a Philosophical examination, nor explain'd by the ordinary laws of nature, by involuntary causes, and blind faculties; which they were taught to be intelligent, eternal, and immortal GODS. And therefore when ANAXAGORAS discover'd that the moon had but a borrow'd light from the sun, and so gave the reasons of its wax and wane, such a doctrine (as *Plutarch* assures us) durst not be made public; but was secretly committed to very few, and even to them under a promise of fidelity. What examples cou'd I not produce to the same purpose!

Invitation
CIAE.



XI.



HEREFORE, things standing on this foot, no wise man will deny but PLATO spoke divinely, when he said, that to discover the creator and parent of the Universe, was difficult: but to explain his nature to the Vulgar, impossible; which is not the less true, were this Vulgar ever so willing to understand. Consonant to PLATO spoke DEMOPHILUS the Pythagorean, saying; that

In TIMAEO,
Edit. SER-
RAN.
vol. 3. p.
28.

In Sen-
tent.

to begin any discourse about GOD among men of prejudic'd opinions, is by no means safe: for whether truth be told to such or falsehood, tis equally dangerous. From this difficulty therefore, or rather diffidence and caution, sprung VARRO's threefold Theology, the Mythical, Physical, and Political; or the Fabulous, Philosophical, and Civil: wherof the first and the last sort are certain masks of Truth, or rather ingenious subterfuges from telling it. *They call that the mythical Theology* (says VARRO) *which is chiefly us'd by the Poets, the physical by the Philosophers, and the political by particular nations.* The first and the last he absolutely rejects; but approves the second, *which men's ears can more easily indure within the walls of a School, than abroad in the open Market-place:* because, as he there says, *natural Theology related to the UNIVERSE; than which those Philosophers, says AUGUSTIN very rightly, judge nothing more excellent to exist.* Among the rest this is most notoriously true of the Stoics, who reduc'd all the fabulous and popular Theology to the natural; or so explain'd all the fables of the Poets and the Vulgar, as to have been originally meant of natural causes and effects. They were too sagacious to admit the truth of such things in the literal sense, and too prudent to reject them all as nonsense: which led them of course, by the principle of self-preservation, to impose upon them a tolerable sense of their own; that they might not be deem'd wholly to deny the Religion in vogue, but to differ onely from others about the design and interpretation of it. This artifice, which I fancy has not perish'd with the Stoics, cou'd not escape the penetration of CICERO, who yet had sometimes recourse to it himself.

First ZENO (says COTTA) *after him CLEAN-THES, and then CHRYSIPPUS, were at great pains to no purpose, to give a reasonable explanation*

Apud AUGUSTIN de Civitate Dei, lib. 6. cap. 5.

Ibid.

Ibid.

De Nat. Deor. lib. 3. cap. 24.

sion of commentitious Fables, and to account for the etymology of the very names of every GOD: which when you do, adds he, you plainly intimate, that the matter is quite otherwise than the bulk of mankind believes; you pretending that such as are held for GODS, do rather denote the natures of particular things, than the history of divine persons. The same CICERO does often elsewhere express his aversion to Fables; as being, if not the parents, yet certainly the fosterers of Superstition. From another reason, says he, and indeed a physical one, has proceeded a great multitude of GODS: which, being introduc'd under human shape, have supply'd the Poets with Fables, but at the same time have fill'd the life of men with all sorts of Superstition. He that wou'd not be at the pains of turning over many volumes, and yet is desirous to learn the Physical explications, which the Stoic and other Philosophers gave of the Heathen Mythology, of the very names as well as of the histories of each God and Goddess; I recommend to him the small treatise written by CORNUTUS, vulgarly call'd PHURNUTUS, of the nature of the Gods, as not onely the most ingenious, but likewise in all respects the best.

Ibid. lib. 2.
cap. 24.

Φουρνουτου
θεοειραπε-
ει της των
θεων φυ-
σεως: or,
as in some
Manu-
scripts,
Κουρνου-
του επι-
δεξιων των
κατα την
Ελληνι-
κην θεοει-
ραν παρ-
αδοξασ-
αντων.



XII.



THAT I may now return to VARRO, his account of the antient triple Theology is wholly approv'd by PLUTARCH; who even transcribes his words, tho inverting the order a

little, as the following passage makes as clear as the sun. *They, who have deliver'd unto us the*

WORSHIP

De P'acit.
Philosoph.
lib. 1. cap. 6.

WORSHIP OF THE GODS, *made use of three kinds of forms; the natural, the fabulous, and the legal: the Philosophers teach the natural, the Poets the fabulous, and the several Governments appoint their own laws; that is, by inserting into the Calenders the Heros of their own country, the Inventors of useful arts, and such as became any way Benefactors to mankind. Such as these, having been first consecrated to immortal memory in the Fasti by the Magistrates, were next advanc'd by the Populace into the same immortal nature of the Gods, whose anniversary festivals were mark'd there: and the more knowing or learned expos'd their folly, at the same time that, by their Allegories, they pretended to vindicate those Gods from contempt; thus no less dextrously, than prudently, concealing their own opinions. Not onely before PLUTARCH, but likewise before VARRO, the Pontif SCEVOIA distinguish'd these three kinds of Gods: the first owing their being to the Poets, the second to the Philosophers, and the third to the Legislators or Magistrates. The first sort he esteem'd idle and ridiculous, nor cou'd he help judging the last to be most false, or in other words an imposture; tho nevertheless he wou'd not have it much disturb'd, much less to be totally abrogated. For he was of the same opinion, which was afterwards openly defended by MARCUS VARRO: that many things were true, which it was not onely useful the People shou'd not know; but that, tho absolutely false, it was expedient the People shou'd believe otherwise. This is at present the favorite maxim, not of two or three persons onely in a country, who juggle with the public, and imagine that deceiving the people is the highest Reason of State; but tis likewise the common cant of many others, elevated indeed above the vulgar rank, but naturally timorous,*

Apud AUGUSTIN. de C. D. lib. 4. cap. 27.

Ibid. cap. 31.

or prostitute time-servers. We ought in the mean while most carefully to observe, that the Priests were every where the cause, why the Philosophers invented those occult ways of speaking and writing. For while the Priests industriously conceal'd their Mysteries; lest, being clearly understood, they might by the Philosophers be expos'd to the laughter of the people; as fabulous; false, and useless: the Philosophers, on the other hand, conceal'd their sentiments of the Nature of things, under the veil of divine allegories; lest being accus'd of impiety by the Priests (which often happen'd) they might be expos'd in their turn to the hatred, if not to the fury of the Vulgar. Now the Philosophers holding this cautious conduct to be lawful, and even necessary, as I said, on the account of self-preservation; I easily conceive the threefold passion of a true Philosopher at sacrifice to have been, despising the Mob, detesting the PRIEST; and delighting in his own LIBERTY:



XIII.



HAVE more than once hinted, that *the External and Internal Doctrine*, are as much now in use as ever; tho the distinction is not so openly and professedly approv'd, as among the Antients. This puts me in mind of what I was told by a near relation to the old Lord SHAFTESBURY. The latter conferring one day with Major WILDMAN about the many sects of Religion in the world, they came to this conclusion at last; that,

notwith-

notwithstanding those infinite divisions caus'd by the interest of the Priests and the ignorance of the People, ALL WISE MEN ARE OF THE SAME RELIGION: wherupon a Lady in the room, who seem'd to mind her needle more than their discourse, demanded with some concern what that Religion was? to whom the Lord SHAFTESBURY strait reply'd, *Madam, wise men never tell.* And indeed, considering how dangerous it is made to tell the truth, tis difficult to know when any man declares his real sentiments of things. I have often, I confess, read of desires to some, and defiances to others (not tolerated by the Laws) to produce their arguments: but this was, in other words, desiring them to get themselves disgrac'd or punish'd, depriv'd or excommunicated. Nay, I have read of invitations to Heretics, Deists, and Atheists, to speak above-board; and heard it much lamented, that the books of such were formerly destroy'd, or that they are not suffer'd now to write: because Truth wou'd thereby triumph the more, and these unfortunate men be the more easily reclaim'd. Many of those who exprest such desires, having been very good men, wou'd be not a little sorry if the others had comply'd; when they found they had drawn them into a snare, out of which they cou'd not extricate them: and as for those whose invitations tend to decoy and trepan, they must be left to the conscience of their own base designs; as the persons deluded by them, ought to suffer unpity'd for their folly. Now if it be a desirable thing to have the Truth told without disguise, there's but one method to procure such a blessing. *Let all men freely speak what they think, without being ever branded or punish'd but for wicked practises, and leaving their speculative opinions to be confuted or approv'd by whoever pleases: then you are sure to hear the whole truth; and*
till

till then but very scantily, or obscurely, if at all. Till then, I say, *Transubstantiation* will in one country be profest, by such who believe it as little, as many do the *Athanasian Creed* in another country. But what do I talk of this or that country, when examples in all countries are numberless? nor will the last in our own be that of a certain Doctor, who wrote *Difficulties* Esoterically, and Exoterically preach'd a *Sermon*. In this state of things, while liberty in its full extent is more to be wish'd than expected, and that thro human weakness people will prefer their repose, fame, or preferments, before speaking of Truth; there is nevertheless one observation left us, wherby to make a probable judgement of the sincerity of others in declaring their opinions. 'Tis this. *When a man maintains what's commonly believ'd, or professes what's publicly injoin'd, it is not always a sure rule that he speaks what he thinks: but when he seriously maintains the contrary of what's by law establish'd, and openly declares for what most others oppose, then there's a strong presumption that he utters his mind.* Yet even this observation may be found to fail, unless full and impartial Liberty obtains; which I cou'd show, were this a place for it, to be very consistent with national Establishments. But to give in one person an example of liberty and reserve, of external and internal doctrines, an ample profession of speaking what he thinks, and an absolute uncertainty whether he does so or not, I shall bring SYNESIUS here on the stage. He was a man of high quality and bright parts, who, from a Heathen Philosopher of the Platonic sect, became Bishop of Ptolemais in the beginning of the fifth century. By that time Bishops were come to be ministers of state, rather than overseers of their flocks; which made the Episcopate a place of great honor and authority, but subject

to much fatigue and envy. Nor is it to be forgot, that, the better to carry on the Christian cause, which needed no such arts, men of establish'd reputation were not onely courted to be Clergymen, but accepted upon very easy terms, as to their Christianity it self. Among these SYNESIUS is not the least remarkable. He was by nature averse to business, and by Philosophy much addicted to contemplation: yet he was consecrated a Bishop whether he wou'd or not, about the Year 410, a thing he frequently deplores. In how many of his Letters does he lament, that, being made a Bishop, he was involv'd in secular affairs? how pathetically does he set forth, what a hard thing it was, to persuade him to enter into Orders? how boldly does he own, that he wish'd for death, sooner than to change his Philosophical for an Episcopal life? how often, how earnestly, does he beg to be discharg'd from his office? with what ingenuity does he declare, that being by education a Heathen, and by profession a Philosopher; every thing went wrong with him, since he presum'd to serve at the Altar? Particularly, in a Letter to his Friend OLYMPIUS, he assures him, that if the Episcopate shou'd prove any hindrance to his Philosophy, he wou'd quit his Diocese; abjure his Orders, and remove into Greece. All this, some will say, shows his indolence or his humility; but is nothing to your subject, of *the Exoteric and Esoteric Philosophy*. These Gentlemen will change their note, when they learn that SYNESIUS was made a Bishop, tho he was not a Christian, and so must needs preach what he did not believe. This nevertheless is literally true, unless a man be deem'd a Christian, who disbelieves the immediate creation of the soul, the End of the world, and the Resurrection of the dead. In a long Letter to his brother, he

Epist. 11,
13, 57, 67,
80, 105,
&c.

Epist. 95.

Epist. 105,

H

expresses

expresses his aversion to the Crozier on diverse accounts, being led by inclination rather to continue in the modesty of Philosophy, than to be elevated to the grandeur of Episcopacy; and fearing lest the latter shou'd spoil the former, by making him proud and arrogant. He appears most loath to quit his wife, which he protests he will not do; but wishes to have many children by her, as two or three he had. But this is not

Ibid.

Ibid.

all. 'Tis difficult, says he, or rather absolutely impossible, to unsettle those doctrines, which, by the means of knowledge, are rooted in the soul to a demonstration. But you know, continues he, that Philosophy is diametrically opposite to the common doctrines. Well: what were those doctrines he cou'd not digest? Verily, says he, I shall never be

He Believ'd

Preexistence.

persuaded, that the Soul had no being before the body; I shall not profess, that the World, and all its parts shall perish together; the threadbare doctrine of the Resurrection I conceive to denote something sacred and secret, but am very farr from approving the prejudices of the vulgar. They are not, you see, trivial or indifferent points at which he boggles: and since the Resurrection of the dead, was one of the articles essentially requir'd to be believ'd by those that were baptiz'd; how was it possible he cou'd be reckon'd a Christian, however he might, as things went then, be a very good Bishop? His memory fail'd PHOTIUS, when he writes it was in an Epistle to THEOPHILUS, that SYNESIUS deny'd the Resurrection, whereas it was in this to his brother: or perhaps he did it also in a Letter to that Patriarch of Alexandria, which is since lost. The same PHOTIUS plainly asserts, that, tho persisting in his denial of the Resurrection, they ordain'd SYNESIUS Bishop; not doubting but so good a man, endow'd with such uncommon virtues, wou'd sooner

God. 26.

Ibid.

sooner or later believe this doctrine. This is like those matches concluded by covetous parents, between young people who do not greatly care for each other; securing a good fortune first, and not doubting but love will come after. They are however commonly mistaken in their politics. But PHOTIUS, several hundred years posterior to SYNESIUS, avers that he easily came into the belief of the Resurrection, after he was made a Bishop. The same things are also reported by EVAGRIUS. It may well be that he did so, and it may as well be that he did not: for, in the fore-cited Letter to his brother, he roundly declares, that it may sometimes be expedient to ly, in order to do good; exact philosophical truth not being necessary for the vulgar, who may receive hurt from their knowlege. *Wherefore, says he, if this method be consistent with the rights of the Episcopal dignity, I may be consecrated. I shall freely philosophize at home, and tell fables abroad; neither teaching nor unteaching, but suffering people to live in their prejudices.* He repeats this rule over and over. Notwithstanding this allow'd liberty among Philosophers, he calls God and men to witness, that, if his Episcopal charge requires otherwise, he will not falsly represent doctrines. So farr, so good. This resolution likewise he more than once repeats in the strongest terms, if swearing by GOD be so. His reluctance to quit his arms, his horses, and his dearest dogs, I pass over as trifles, in respect of his other objections. But why, some may say, will you not acquiesce in his last resolution? I answer, because he teaches me to do otherwise: for in all his works, as well those he wrote after he was made Bishop as before, he inculcates, explains, and praises the distinction of the *Exoteric and Esoteric doctrine*. This, I say, he does every where: and especially where

Ibid.

Lib. 1. cap.

15.

Epist. 105.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Epist. 143. he largely and earnestly advises his friend HERCULANIUS to conceal his philosophical tenets, which he professes to do himself; and recommends to him for a directory, the Letter of LYSIS the Pythagorean to his condisciple HIPPARCHUS, which we have cited above, and which he desires him frequently to peruse. From this particular account of SYNESIUS (of whom more elsewhere) no less than from the whole tenor of this *Dissertation*, it may be easily conceiv'd; *how hard it is to come at TRUTH your self, and how dangerous a thing to publish it to others.*

FINIS.

